

Message Text

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TAGS: OVIP

SUBJ: THAI PRESS ON NOMINATION OF NEW AMB

1. EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE NOMINATION OF MORTON AMBRAMOWITZ AS AMB TO THAILAND HAS BEEN VARIED. BEFORE APPOINTMENT WAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED, PRESS SPECULATION CONCENTRATED ON HIS CURRENT POSITION AS DEP ASSISTSEC OF DEFENSE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE MAY 16 ISSUE OF SIAM RATH, THE THAI-LANGUAGE PAPER MOST READ BY THE POLITICAL ELITE HERE, SAID: "WHAT WE SHOULD OBSERVE IS THE PERSON WHO WILL REPLACE AMB WHITEHOUSE. MR ABRAMOWITZ IS DEPASIST SEC OF STATE (SIC) FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS. HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT COINCIDES WITH THE US-AUSTRALIAN JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES, AND THE ATMOSPHERE OF USURPING INFLUENCE IN THIS REGION. HE IS A CAREER DIPLOMAT, BUT HE STUDIED AT THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGY IN LONDON. CERTAINLY HE WILL BE FAR SIGHTED IN EXAMINING MILITARY SOUTHEAST ASIAN PROBLEMS." ONCE THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE BY OUR PRESS RELEASE ON JUNE 3, WHICH INCLUDED AN OFFICIAL SKETCH OF HIS BACKGROUND, THE FIRST COMMENTS CONCENTRATED ON HIS CHINA EXPERTISE. FOR EXAMPLE, ON JUNE 5 THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NATION HEADLINED "NEW US ENVOY A VETERAN CHINA WATCHER." MASS CIRCULATION THAI RATH OF JUNE 5 COMMENTED BRIEFLY ON HIS CHINA EXPERTISE AND HIS CHINESE LANGUAGE ABILITY.

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2. THE HONG KONG BASED FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, WHICH HAS AN IMPORTANT READERSHIP HERE, COMMENTED IN ITS JUNE 16 ISSUE "PERHAPSE TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE CHINESE WASHINGTON'S COMMITMENT TO SEA, PRES JIMMY CARTER HAS CHOSEN A CHINESE SPECIALIST AND DEFENSE EXPERT, MORTON ABRAMOWITZ, TO BE US AMB TO THAILAND. ABRAMOWITZ, WHO WAS UNPOPULAR IN PEKING FOR HIS 'ONE CHINA BUT NOT NOW' LINE... HAS SINCE ENDEARED HIMSELF BY HIS ANTI-SOVIET

STAND."

3. ON JUNE 15, THE SMALL-CIRCULATION MATI CHON, PERHAPS THE MOST LEFTIST AND THE MOST EXTREME OF THE THAI LANGUAGE PAPERS CURRENTLY ALLOWD TO PUBLISH HERE, PUBLISHED A RAMBLING EDITORIAL VARIOUSLY ASCRIBING THE APPOINTMENT OF MR ABRAMOWITZ AS DUE TO THAILAND'S IMPORTANTANCE TO ASEAN, ITS SITUATION AS A COUNTRY IN WHICH THE US, CHINA AND THE USSR ARE COMPETING FOR INFLUENCE, US RESIGNATION TO THAILAND BECOMING THE NEXT "DOMINO" IN ABOUT FIVE YEARS AND US DESISRE TO REGAIN INFLUENCE IN THE AREA.

4. THE EDITORIAL ENDS BY SAYING: "IF THE US BELIEVES THAT THE AMOUNT OF 500 MILLION DOLLARS (SIC) WHICH MR ABRAMOWITZ WILL BRING WITH HIM CAN REDEEM THE LOST INFLUENCE IN THIS REGION, WE WANT TO TELL IT THAT SUM IS NOT ENOUGH. BUT IF THAT SUM IS USED FOR A COUP IN THAILAND, WE CAN'T SAY A WORD ABOUT IT."

COMMENT: THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW AMERICAN AMB IN THAILAND HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE OCCASION FOR CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION AS TO THE "MEANING" OF THE APPOIINTMENT. SCH SPECULATION IS BY NO MEANS LIMITED TO THE PRESS BUT IS HEARD FROM THE DIP CORPS AS WELL. AS THE AMB'S ARRIVAL NEARS, THERE WILL INEVITABLY BE FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO READ PARTICULAR MEANINGS INTO HIS SELECTION, PARTICULARLY IN POLICY TERMS. AS THE ABOVE REPORTS INDICATE, THE THAI PRESS IS OFTEN PREPARED TO SPECULATE FREELY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND ERRONEOUSLY ON DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE US AND OUR PRESENCE IN THAILAND..O'DONOHUE

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